



For Release: Friday, June 17, 2016

16-1169-DAL

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County Employment and Wages in Arkansas – Fourth Quarter 2015

Employment increased in the three largest Arkansas counties from December 2014 to December 2015, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. (Large counties are those with 2014 annual average employment levels of 75,000 or more.) Regional Commissioner Stanley W. Suchman noted that the rates of job growth in all three of the large Arkansas counties equaled or exceeded the national average. Washington County's 4.3-percent job gain ranked 25th nationwide and Benton County's 3.6-percent gain ranked 51st. (See [table 1.](#))

Nationally, employment advanced 1.9 percent from December 2014 to December 2015 with 308 of the 342 largest U.S. counties registering increases. Williamson, Tenn., recorded the largest percentage increase in the country, up 6.8 percent over the year. Ector, Texas, registered the largest percentage employment decline among large counties, down 11.8 percent.

Among the three largest counties in Arkansas, employment was highest in Pulaski County (250,200) in December 2015. Benton and Washington Counties had employment levels of 112,700 and 102,700, respectively. Together, the three largest Arkansas counties accounted for 38.8 percent of total employment within the state. Nationwide, the 342 largest counties made up 72.5 percent of total U.S. employment.

From the fourth quarter of 2014 to the fourth quarter of 2015, the largest percentage increase in average weekly wages in Arkansas's large counties was Washington County's 6.7-percent gain. (See [table 1.](#)) Benton recorded the highest average weekly wage among the state's large counties at \$1,042 per week. Nationally, the average weekly wage increased 4.4 percent from a year ago to \$1,082 in the fourth quarter of 2015.

Employment and wage levels (but not over-the-year changes) are also available for the 72 counties in Arkansas with employment levels below 75,000. Wage levels in all of these smaller counties were below the national average in December 2015. (See [table 2.](#))

Large county wage changes

The average weekly wage in Washington County increased 6.7 percent from the fourth quarter of 2014 to the fourth quarter of 2015, above the national average increase of 4.4 percent. (See [table 1.](#)) Washington's over-the-year wage gain ranked 39th among the 342 large U.S. counties. Over-the-year wage growth was below the U.S. average in Pulaski (3.7 percent, 254th) and Benton (3.5 percent, 262nd).

Among the 342 large U.S. counties, 325 had over-the-year wage increases. Wyandotte, Kan., had the largest wage gain, up 10.4 percent from the fourth quarter of 2014. Sonoma, Calif., was second with a wage gain of 10.0 percent, followed by the counties of Lake, Ill. (9.8 percent) and Passaic, N.J. (9.4 percent).

Ten large U.S. counties experienced over-the-year decreases in average weekly wages. Midland, Texas, had the largest percentage decline in average weekly wages with a loss of 11.5 percent. Within Midland, natural resources and mining had the largest impact on the county's average weekly wage decline with a decrease of 11.6 percent. Ector, Texas, had the second largest decrease in average weekly wages, down 8.0 percent from the fourth quarter of 2014, followed by Lafayette, La. (-4.3 percent) and Gregg, Texas (-3.2 percent).

Large county average weekly wages

Weekly wage levels in the state's three large counties were below the nationwide average (\$1,082) in the fourth quarter of 2015. Benton County's average weekly wage of \$1,042 ranked 129th among the 342 large U.S. counties. Pulaski's weekly wage, \$972, ranked 186th and Washington's, \$952, ranked 200th nationally.

Seventy percent of the large U.S. counties (241) reported average weekly wages below the national average of \$1,082. Cameron, Texas, reported the lowest weekly wage (\$649), followed by Horry, S.C. (\$653) and Hidalgo, Texas (\$661).

Nationally, 100 large counties registered average weekly wages above the U.S. average in the fourth quarter of 2015. Santa Clara, Calif., held the top position with an average weekly wage of \$2,335. New York, N.Y., was second at \$2,235, followed by San Mateo, Calif., at \$2,095. Average weekly wages in the highest-ranked county, Santa Clara, Calif., were more than three times the average weekly wage in the lowest-ranked county, Cameron, Texas (\$649).

Average weekly wages in Arkansas's smaller counties

All 72 of Arkansas's smaller counties – those with employment below 75,000 – reported weekly wages below the national average of \$1,082 in the fourth quarter of 2015. Among these smaller counties, the highest weekly wages were in Calhoun (\$1,028) and Little River (\$978), while the lowest weekly wage was in Newton (\$492). (See [table 2](#).)

When all 75 counties in Arkansas were considered, 12 reported average weekly wages under \$600, 30 reported wages from \$600 to \$699, 23 had wages from \$700 to \$799, and 10 averaged \$800 or more per week. (See [chart 1](#).) Higher-paying counties were located around the metropolitan areas of Blytheville, Fort Smith, Fayetteville, Little Rock, and along the southern border of the state. Lower-paying counties were generally concentrated in the northern portion of the state.

Additional statistics and other information

QCEW data for states have been included in this release in [table 3](#). For additional information about quarterly employment and wages data, please read the Technical Note or visit www.bls.gov/cew.

Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. The 2014 edition of this publication contains selected data produced by Business Employment Dynamics (BED) on job gains and losses, as well as selected data from the first quarter 2015 version of the news release. Tables and additional content from *Employment and Wages Annual Averages 2014* are now available online at www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn14.htm. The 2015 edition of *Employment and Wages Annual Averages Online* will be available in September 2016.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 691-5200; Federal Relay Service: (800) 877-8339.

The County Employment and Wages release for first quarter 2016 is scheduled to be released on Wednesday, September 7, 2016.

Technical Note

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, also known as the ES-202 program. The data are derived from summaries of employment and total pay of workers covered by state and federal unemployment insurance (UI) legislation and provided by State Workforce Agencies (SWAs). The 9.7 million employer reports cover 141.9 million full- and part-time workers. The average weekly wage values are calculated by dividing quarterly total wages by the average of the three monthly employment levels of those covered by UI programs. The result is then divided by 13, the number of weeks in a quarter. It is to be noted, therefore, that over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work. Thus, wages may vary among counties, metropolitan areas, or states for reasons other than changes in the average wage level. Data for all states, Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), counties, and the nation are available on the BLS Web site at www.bls.gov/cew/; however, data in QCEW press releases have been revised (see Technical Note below) and may not match the data contained on the Bureau's Web site.

QCEW data are not designed as a time series. QCEW data are simply the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. Establishments can move in or out of a county or industry for a number of reasons—some reflecting economic events, others reflecting administrative changes.

The preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS Web site. These potential differences result from the states' continuing receipt, review and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS Web site are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative (noneconomic) changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. Adjusting for these administrative changes allows users to more accurately assess changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary economic activity) over a 12-month period. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

Table 1. Covered employment and wages in the United States and the 3 largest counties in Arkansas, fourth quarter 2015

| Area | Employment | | | Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾ | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|---|---|------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| | December 2015 (thousands) | Percent change, December 2014-15 ⁽²⁾ | National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾ | Average weekly wage | National ranking by level ⁽³⁾ | Percent change, fourth quarter 2014-15 ⁽²⁾ | National ranking by percent change ⁽³⁾ |
| United States ⁽⁴⁾ | 141,924.5 | 1.9 | -- | \$1,082 | -- | 4.4 | -- |
| Arkansas | 1,201.4 | 1.7 | -- | 838 | 46 | 3.8 | 35 |
| Benton, Ark. | 112.7 | 3.6 | 51 | 1,042 | 129 | 3.5 | 262 |
| Pulaski, Ark. | 250.2 | 1.9 | 171 | 972 | 186 | 3.7 | 254 |
| Washington, Ark. | 102.7 | 4.3 | 25 | 952 | 200 | 6.7 | 39 |

(1) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(2) Percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

(3) Ranking does not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(4) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

Note: Data are preliminary. Covered employment and wages includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

Table 2. Covered employment and wages in the United States and all counties in Arkansas, fourth quarter 2015

| Area | Employment December 2015 | Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾ |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| United States ⁽²⁾ | 141,924,459 | \$1,082 |
| Arkansas | 1,201,400 | 838 |
| Arkansas | 10,367 | 792 |
| Ashley | 6,922 | 827 |
| Baxter | 14,681 | 694 |
| Benton | 112,747 | 1,042 |
| Boone | 14,105 | 713 |
| Bradley | 3,824 | 656 |
| Calhoun | 2,712 | 1,028 |
| Carroll | 10,727 | 575 |
| Chicot | 3,303 | 638 |
| Clark | 9,374 | 656 |
| Clay | 3,440 | 606 |
| Cleburne | 6,721 | 650 |
| Cleveland | 978 | 590 |
| Columbia | 8,360 | 814 |
| Conway | 6,980 | 718 |
| Craighead | 48,622 | 768 |
| Crawford | 19,469 | 696 |
| Crittenden | 17,351 | 738 |
| Cross | 5,058 | 649 |
| Dallas | 2,840 | 611 |
| Desha | 4,668 | 662 |
| Drew | 6,572 | 658 |
| Faulkner | 40,970 | 778 |
| Franklin | 4,498 | 761 |
| Fulton | 1,873 | 554 |
| Garland | 36,097 | 719 |
| Grant | 3,940 | 738 |
| Greene | 15,318 | 724 |
| Hempstead | 7,853 | 679 |
| Hot Spring | 8,624 | 707 |
| Howard | 7,004 | 615 |
| Independence | 15,544 | 740 |
| Izard | 3,208 | 632 |
| Jackson | 5,365 | 701 |
| Jefferson | 28,580 | 786 |
| Johnson | 8,683 | 631 |
| Lafayette | 1,199 | 702 |
| Lawrence | 4,176 | 615 |
| Lee | 1,925 | 699 |
| Lincoln | 2,845 | 677 |
| Little River | 3,521 | 978 |
| Logan | 5,584 | 632 |
| Lonoke | 13,974 | 676 |
| Madison | 3,297 | 678 |
| Marion | 3,817 | 588 |
| Miller | 13,363 | 781 |
| Mississippi | 18,106 | 838 |
| Monroe | 2,084 | 600 |
| Montgomery | 1,311 | 525 |
| Nevada | 2,524 | 686 |
| Newton | 1,095 | 492 |
| Ouachita | 7,152 | 667 |
| Perry | 1,341 | 777 |

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

Table 2. Covered employment and wages in the United States and all counties in Arkansas, fourth quarter 2015 - Continued

| Area | Employment December 2015 | Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾ |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Phillips | 5,715 | 641 |
| Pike | 2,425 | 582 |
| Poinsett | 5,192 | 715 |
| Polk | 5,927 | 604 |
| Pope | 27,114 | 789 |
| Prairie | 1,487 | 655 |
| Pulaski | 250,244 | 972 |
| Randolph | 4,297 | 553 |
| Saline | 23,393 | 710 |
| Scott | 3,088 | 583 |
| Searcy | 1,484 | 526 |
| Sebastian | 66,223 | 815 |
| Sevier | 4,839 | 610 |
| Sharp | 3,781 | 577 |
| St. Francis | 7,972 | 665 |
| Stone | 2,532 | 540 |
| Union | 18,745 | 913 |
| Van Buren | 3,861 | 731 |
| Washington | 102,705 | 952 |
| White | 24,904 | 716 |
| Woodruff | 1,804 | 713 |
| Yell | 6,351 | 605 |

(1) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(2) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

Note: Covered employment and wages includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs. Data are preliminary.

Table 3. Covered employment and wages by state, fourth quarter 2015

| State | Employment | | Average weekly wage ⁽¹⁾ | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| | December 2015 (thousands) | Percent change, December 2014-15 | Average weekly wage | National ranking by level | Percent change, fourth quarter 2014-15 | National ranking by percent change |
| United States ⁽²⁾ | 141,924.5 | 1.9 | \$1,082 | -- | 4.4 | -- |
| Alabama | 1,916.2 | 1.4 | 912 | 37 | 3.4 | 37 |
| Alaska | 315.9 | -0.5 | 1,095 | 13 | 2.9 | 43 |
| Arizona | 2,701.8 | 2.6 | 967 | 24 | 4.4 | 28 |
| Arkansas | 1,201.4 | 1.7 | 838 | 46 | 3.8 | 35 |
| California | 16,593.8 | 3.1 | 1,274 | 5 | 5.4 | 10 |
| Colorado | 2,537.5 | 2.5 | 1,103 | 11 | 3.3 | 40 |
| Connecticut | 1,685.1 | 0.3 | 1,334 | 4 | 4.3 | 29 |
| Delaware | 441.2 | 1.8 | 1,086 | 15 | 3.4 | 37 |
| District of Columbia | 754.2 | 2.2 | 1,756 | 1 | 3.4 | 37 |
| Florida | 8,308.1 | 3.7 | 958 | 26 | 5.2 | 16 |
| Georgia..... | 4,249.4 | 2.9 | 1,001 | 21 | 4.5 | 27 |
| Hawaii..... | 653.0 | 2.2 | 957 | 27 | 5.4 | 10 |
| Idaho | 670.1 | 3.4 | 803 | 50 | 2.6 | 45 |
| Illinois | 5,931.2 | 1.4 | 1,146 | 8 | 5.1 | 18 |
| Indiana..... | 2,996.3 | 1.7 | 891 | 40 | 5.3 | 14 |
| Iowa | 1,539.0 | 0.7 | 920 | 34 | 5.7 | 3 |
| Kansas | 1,382.1 | 0.4 | 898 | 38 | 5.0 | 20 |
| Kentucky..... | 1,881.3 | 1.6 | 885 | 41 | 5.9 | 1 |
| Louisiana | 1,937.4 | -1.0 | 940 | 29 | 1.8 | 47 |
| Maine..... | 596.9 | 0.7 | 873 | 43 | 5.7 | 3 |
| Maryland..... | 2,636.7 | 1.7 | 1,175 | 7 | 5.6 | 5 |
| Massachusetts | 3,479.1 | 1.6 | 1,385 | 2 | 5.4 | 10 |
| Michigan | 4,218.9 | 1.5 | 1,043 | 18 | 5.9 | 1 |
| Minnesota..... | 2,805.8 | 1.5 | 1,073 | 16 | 4.8 | 22 |
| Mississippi..... | 1,133.8 | 1.3 | 770 | 51 | 3.1 | 41 |
| Missouri | 2,759.6 | 1.8 | 933 | 33 | 4.6 | 25 |
| Montana | 453.2 | 2.5 | 818 | 49 | 3.0 | 42 |
| Nebraska | 971.8 | 1.4 | 880 | 42 | 5.1 | 18 |
| Nevada | 1,272.2 | 3.5 | 935 | 32 | 4.0 | 31 |
| New Hampshire..... | 648.6 | 1.7 | 1,139 | 9 | 5.4 | 10 |
| New Jersey..... | 3,988.4 | 1.7 | 1,262 | 6 | 4.0 | 31 |
| New Mexico | 808.9 | -0.1 | 865 | 44 | 1.8 | 47 |
| New York | 9,227.6 | 1.7 | 1,372 | 3 | 3.9 | 34 |
| North Carolina | 4,247.1 | 2.5 | 939 | 30 | 5.5 | 8 |
| North Dakota | 428.1 | -5.9 | 1,021 | 20 | -2.8 | 51 |
| Ohio | 5,328.8 | 1.2 | 964 | 25 | 4.6 | 25 |
| Oklahoma | 1,605.0 | -0.7 | 896 | 39 | 2.3 | 46 |
| Oregon | 1,814.8 | 3.3 | 979 | 23 | 5.5 | 8 |
| Pennsylvania | 5,759.7 | 0.7 | 1,063 | 17 | 4.9 | 21 |
| Rhode Island | 478.1 | 1.5 | 1,043 | 18 | 4.0 | 31 |
| South Carolina..... | 1,987.1 | 2.8 | 860 | 45 | 5.3 | 14 |
| South Dakota..... | 417.7 | 1.2 | 832 | 47 | 5.2 | 16 |
| Tennessee | 2,898.1 | 2.8 | 980 | 22 | 5.6 | 5 |
| Texas | 11,832.1 | 1.4 | 1,099 | 12 | 2.7 | 44 |
| Utah | 1,375.6 | 3.8 | 913 | 36 | 4.7 | 23 |
| Vermont..... | 312.1 | 0.3 | 919 | 35 | 4.1 | 30 |
| Virginia..... | 3,806.2 | 3.0 | 1,094 | 14 | 3.5 | 36 |
| Washington..... | 3,137.2 | 2.3 | 1,132 | 10 | 4.7 | 23 |
| West Virginia | 703.7 | -1.3 | 829 | 48 | 1.3 | 49 |
| Wisconsin | 2,820.5 | 1.1 | 944 | 28 | 5.6 | 5 |
| Wyoming | 276.0 | -2.9 | 937 | 31 | -1.7 | 50 |
| Puerto Rico..... | 929.9 | -1.6 | 565 | (3) | 1.6 | (3) |
| Virgin Islands..... | 38.4 | -0.3 | 787 | (3) | 4.7 | (3) |

Note: See footnotes at end of table.

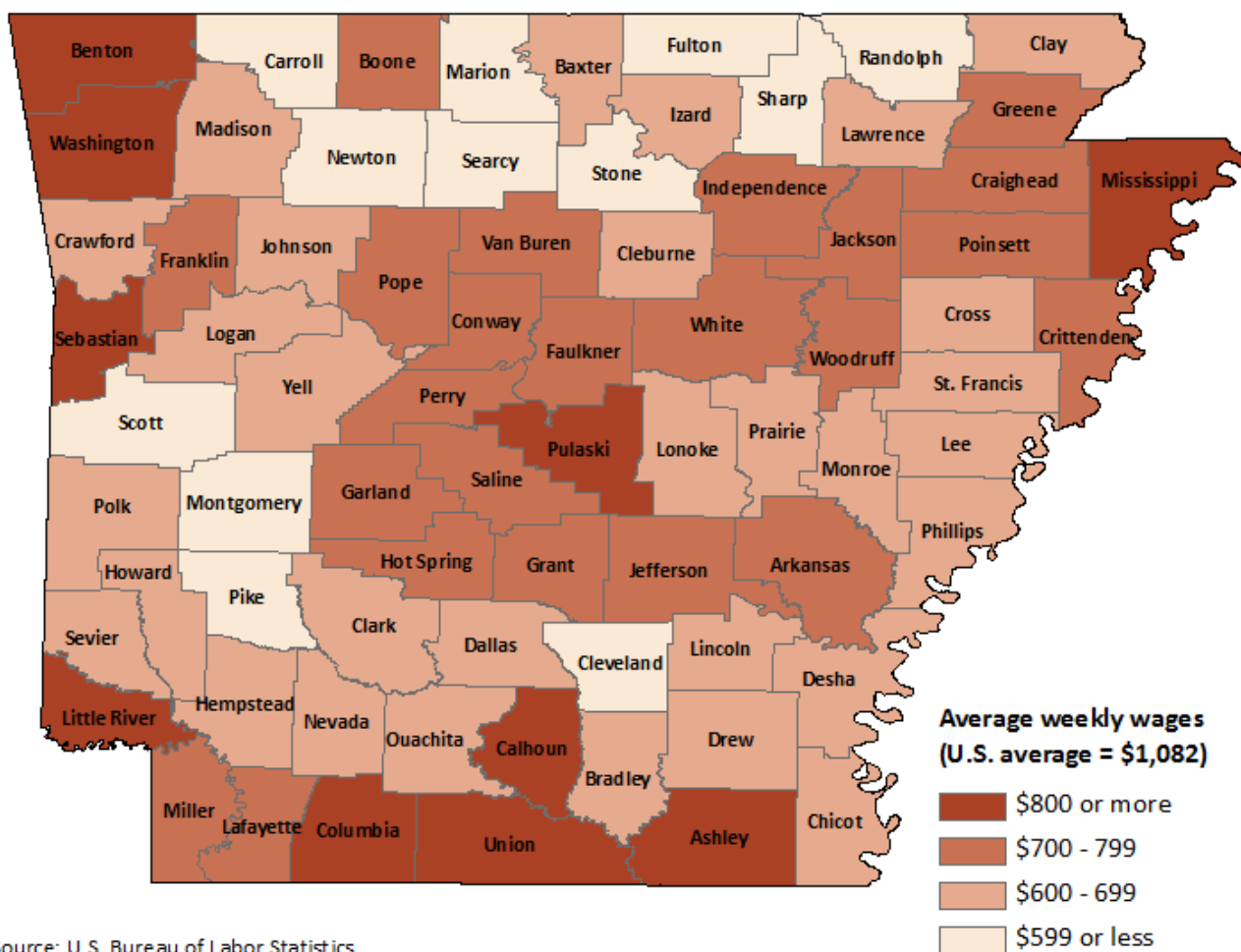
(1) Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

(2) Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

(3) Data not included in the national ranking.

Note: Data are preliminary. Covered employment and wages includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

Chart 1. Average weekly wages by county in Arkansas, fourth quarter 2015



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.